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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PSC CLOSES OUT FURNAS-HARLAN COUNTY NIEF PROJECT

LINCOLN – A project that brought high-speed wireless Internet service to parts of Furnas and Harlan Counties received its final payment this week from the Nebraska Public Service Commission.

The Commission awarded a grant of \$112,316 to the Furnas and Harlan County Partnership in 2007 from the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund (NIEF). On April 10 of this year, the partnership notified the Commission that the project was completed and the Commission responded with approval of the final half of the grant.

The project brought high-speed Internet to the southeastern portion of Furnas County as well as the Harlan County communities of Orleans, Stamford, Alma, and Huntley including rural areas surrounding the towns. High-speed Internet service was provided to the village of Huntley and the area of southeast Furnas County. In addition, free high-speed Internet service for the Orleans Public Library was provided as part of the project and service to the village of Stamford was upgraded in a collaborative effort by the Twin Valleys Public Power District and project sponsors. In Huntley, the village's dial-up service speed was cut in half to allow the provider an opportunity to serve twice as many customers before implementation of the grant.

Even though a formal advertising program had not begun when the partnership requested final payment of the grant, nine new customers had signed up for service and there were 18 requests for improved existing service.

NIEF was formed by the 2001 Nebraska Legislature to use some of the profits from the lease of dark fiber optics to benefit rural areas of the state in the installation and deliverance of broadband or other advanced telecommunications infrastructure.

The Furnas and Harlan Partnership was selected in NIEF's second round of offerings..

Fifth District Commissioner Jerry Vap of McCook said the Public Service Commission is glad to have played a role in improving high-speed Internet service to southwest Nebraska. "This is what the NIEF program was intended to do and the success of the Furnas and Harlan Partnership indicates that the program is a success."

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